



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## ICE INVESTIGATORS AWARDED FOR SPEARHEADING ONE OF THE LARGEST INTERNET PIRACY CASES IN HISTORY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Six employees of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will be recognized by the Department of Justice today for their work in targeting a global network of cyberspace gangs that was responsible for pirating billions of dollars worth of software over the Internet.

Supervisory Special Agent **James Plitt**, unit chief of ICE's Cyber Crimes Center, Supervisory Special Agent **Philip Reed**, Senior Special Agent **Michael Godfrey**, Senior Special Agent **Thomas Kim**, Senior Special Agent **Dawn Gabel**, and Senior Intelligence Research Specialist **David Collins** are scheduled to receive the Justice Department Criminal Division's Certificate of Appreciation Award this afternoon in the Great Hall of Justice in Washington, D.C. Assistant Attorney General Christopher A. Wray will present the award for the successful 15-month undercover ICE investigation called "Operation Buccaneer."

Operation Buccaneer, conducted by ICE investigators and analysts in Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and at the ICE Cyber Crimes Center, has been widely recognized as one of the largest Internet copyright investigations ever conducted. The case was the first federal investigation of Internet software piracy to reach across international borders.

"I am extremely proud of the ICE investigators who conducted this ground-breaking undercover investigation. Though Operation Buccaneer, these ICE employees were able to penetrate and dismantle one of the most sophisticated and financially damaging Internet piracy organizations ever encountered," said Marcy Forman, Director of ICE's Office of Investigations.

The case targeted the "WAREZ" community, a loose affiliation of piracy gangs that engaged in massive duplication and distribution of copyrighted software over the Internet. At one time, the WAREZ community was estimated to be responsible for nearly 90 percent of the Internet sites that offered pirated software.

The initial phase of Operation Buccaneer targeted the WAREZ group known as "DrinkorDie," which was one of the most well known gangs in this underground community. Among other things, DrinkorDie members claimed to have "cracked" and released Microsoft's Windows 95 operating system to the world via the Internet two weeks before the software became available commercially.

In December 2001, Operation Buccaneer culminated with the execution of more than 70 search warrants worldwide. Since that time, the case has resulted in the conviction of 27 individuals in the United States for violation of federal copyright laws, as well as the conviction of eight individuals in the United Kingdom and Finland. The leader of the DrinkOrDie group, a citizen and resident of Australia, is the subject of an extradition request by the U.S. government.

As a spin-off of Operation Buccaneer, ICE investigators at the Cyber Crimes Center and in New Haven, Conn., launched Operation Safe Haven in 2002. As with Operation Buccaneer, the investigation targeted individuals who were acquiring and distributing pirated software, movies and games via the Internet. To date, there have been 32 search warrants executed nationwide and six persons have pleaded guilty to copyright infringement offenses in connection with Operation Safe Haven.

The Cyber Crimes Center is ICE's state-of-the-art center for computer-based investigations, with a full range of tools for combating online child exploitation, conducting computer forensic investigations, and fighting crimes facilitated by the Internet.

During the first half of fiscal year 2004, ICE Intellectual Property Rights investigations resulted in a 60 percent increase in arrests, compared to the same period the previous year. As the host agency of the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center, ICE coordinates US efforts against both domestic and international Intellectual Property Rights crime.

In addition, ICE is actively involved in the Administration's STOP initiative, which aims to level the playing field for American businesses and workers by expanding the commitment to combating Intellectual Property Rights crimes.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.*